

SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

# English for Academic and Professional Purposes

Quarter 1 – Week 7

## Writing a Reaction, Review or Critique Paper



## ***What is it?***

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### **How to Write a Reaction Paper?**

A reaction or response paper requires the writer to analyze a text, and then develop commentary related to it. It is a popular academic assignment because it requires thoughtful reading, research, and writing. You can learn how to write a reaction paper by following these writing tips.

#### **Part 1: Prewriting and Actively Reading**

Understand the purpose of a reaction paper. Reaction or response papers are assigned so that after reading a text, you will think carefully about what you feel or think about the text.

1. When you write a response paper, you need to evaluate the text's strengths and weaknesses, along with if and how well the text accomplishes its objective.
2. These papers require a close reading of the text that goes beyond the surface meaning. You must respond to implied ideas, and elaborate, evaluate, and analyze the author's purpose and main points.
3. In many cases, you can use the first-person "I" while writing reaction papers.
4. When you respond to the text, back up your ideas with evidence from the text along with your own connection of ideas, texts, and overarching concepts. If you are asked to agree or disagree, you have to provide convincing evidence about why you feel this way.



## What is it?

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5. If responding to multiple texts, you must analyze how the texts relate. If responding to one text, you probably should connect the text to overarching concepts and themes you have discussed in the class.
6. The same assignment may also be given to films, lectures, field trips, labs, or even class discussions.
7. A reaction paper is not a summary of the text. It also does not state, "I liked this book because it was interesting" or "I hated this because it was boring."

### **Part 2: Figure out what the assignment is asking.**

Before beginning your paper, you must figure out exactly what your teacher or professor is looking for. Some teachers want you to react by analyzing or evaluating the reading. Other teachers want a personal response. Make sure you understand which kind of reaction the assignment calls for.

- You may be asked to react to the text in light of another text
- You may be asked to react to the text in light of another text. If this is the case, you will want to use quotations from both texts in your writing.
- You may be asked to react to the text in the light of the class themes. For example, if you read a book in a Sociology of Gender Roles class, you will want to read, annotate, and react based on how gender roles are described in the book.
- You may be asked to react personally to the text. This is less common, but occasionally the teacher simply wants to know if you have read the text and thought about it. In this case, you should focus on your opinions of the book.

### **Part 3. Read the text you are assigned right after it is assigned**

To complete a reaction paper, you do not just read, give your opinion, and turn in the paper. A reaction paper synthesizes the texts, which means you take the information you read and bring it together so you can analyze and evaluate. You have to give yourself time to do the readings, but more importantly, to digest what you have read so you can put the ideas together.

One of the biggest mistakes that students make is waiting until the last minute to read and react. A reaction is a thoughtful consideration after reading and rereading several times. You may need to reread the text multiple times. First, to read and



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familiarize yourself with the text, then again to start thinking about the assignment and your reactions.

### **Write down your initial reactions**

Write down your initial reactions. After you read through the first time, jot down your initial reactions to the text. Do the same thing on any subsequent readings. • Try completing some of the following sentences after you read: I think that..., I see that..., I feel that..., It seems that..., or In my opinion...

### **Part 4. Annotate the text as you read**

As you read through the text again, annotate it. Annotating in the margins of the text allows you to easily locate quotations, plot lines, character development, or reactions to the text. If you fail to annotate thoroughly, it will be more difficult to create a cohesive reaction paper.

### **Part 5. Question as you read**

As you read the text, you have to start questioning the text. This is where your evaluation of the material and your reaction begins. Some questions to consider include:

#### **What issues or problems does the author address?**

What is the author's main point? What points or assumptions does the author make, and how does she back that up? What are strengths and weaknesses? Where are problems with the argument? How do the texts relate? (if multiple texts) How do these ideas connect to the overall ideas of the class/unit/etc?

### **Part 6. Free write. Start by**

Free writing your reactions and evaluations of the author's ideas. Try to put into words what you think the author is trying to do and whether you agree or disagree. Then ask yourself why and explain why you think these things. Free writing is a great way to start getting your ideas on paper and getting past that initial writer's block. When you finish, read back over what you have just written. Determine what your strongest and most convincing reactions are. Prioritize your points.



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## **Part 7. Decide on your angle**

Reaction papers have to be critical and have some evaluation of the text. Otherwise, you are just summarizing what you read. After free writing, decide what your angle is. Keep asking yourself the same ink about why the author has written the article or story as they have. Why did he structure things in this particular way? How does this relate to the outside world? Questions as you craft a coherent reaction.

## **Part 8. Determine your thesis**

Now that you have completed your free writing and found your angle, you can now shape this into an argument. What interesting thing do you have to say about what you just read? Start to state why what you said is interesting and important. This is the core of your reaction paper. Take all your points, opinions, and observations, and combine them into one claim that you will prove. This is your thesis. Your thesis will be one statement that explains what you will analyze, criticize, or try to prove about the text. It will force your reaction paper to remain focused.

## **Part 9. Organize your paper**

Your paper should follow basic essay format. It needs an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Each body paragraph should directly support your thesis. In each body paragraph, you should be reacting to a different portion of the text. Organize your reactions together into a few common topics so you can write them into paragraphs.

## **Part 10. Gather quotations**

After you organize your ideas into paragraphs, you need to find quotations that will support your points. You must back up your claims with evidence from the text. Look at your annotations for quotations that support your thesis. • Draft paragraphs that introduce quotations, analyze them, and comment on them.

## **Part 11. Structure your paragraphs**

Your paragraphs should always start with a topic sentence. Then you have to decide how to structure your paragraph. You can start with what the author says and follow that with your reaction. Or you can start with the author and then follow with how your reaction contrasts.



# *What is more?*

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## **State your main idea clearly**

State your main idea clearly. Because your topic sentence is likely the first sentence in the paragraph, it needs to clearly state the subject matter of your paragraph without being wordy or difficult to understand... It must include your topic and an opinion, or your controlling idea. The topic sentence in this example states a clear direction ("health benefits of gardening") that you can then elaborate on in your paragraph.

Keep it short and sweet. The topic sentence should put forward your intention without forcing your reader to hunt it down; keeping it short will help keep your intention clear.

## **Avoid introducing yourself**

Avoid introducing you. Although topic sentences vary in structure and content from person to person, at least two things can be assumed about your paper: 1) that you have a title and entire paper to introduce a topic, and 2) your personal information is present somewhere on your essay. Therefore, never use statements such as "I am going to tell you..." or "My paper is about..." or "I studied [this] which are important because of [this]". The paragraphs/essay should tell me that information without an awkward topic sentence presentation.

## **Avoid starting with a quote**

Avoid starting with a quote. You may have a fantastic quote in mind that perfectly introduces your topic. The problem is...they're not your words. The topic sentence should introduce the paragraph and hopefully include your opinion, not someone else's. If the quote is opinion-based, substitute it for your own opinion. If the quote is fact-based, save it and introduce it later in your paragraph.



# *What I have learned?*

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## **Sample Topic Sentences 1. Persuasive Topic Sentences**

Sample Sentence Cell phones at school (for) When Jennifer's track meet was cancelled at the last minute, she needed to find a way to call her mom and ask for a ride home. Cell phones at school (against) Jennifer had never been tempted to cheat on an exam until the day she got an anonymous text from someone in class. School uniforms (for) most students need a structured environment to learn classroom materials, and school uniforms are one of the best ways of keeping the classroom organized and eliminating unnecessary distraction.

### **School uniforms (against)**

School is a place to learn and grow as an individual, but school uniforms restrict student growth by restricting individuality. Athletic scholarships (for) Eric graduated from college and went on to become an important innovator in the field of sports medicine, but he never would have had the chance to go to college if not for the football scholarship he received freshman year. Athletic scholarships (against) Steven could not get enough scholarship money to attend college in spite of having a 3.8 GPA, but his buddy, Eric, only had a 2.9 GPA and received a full ride to play football at a state school. English as the national language (for) Schools across the globe are making it a point to teach their students the English language, but here in the United States, more institutions are gradually allowing their students to skip out on ESL class. English as the national language (against) Every culture has a rich, vibrant heritage, and language is an important part of that heritage, which deserves to be respected and maintained.

### **Lowering the drinking age to 18 (for)**

After coming home from a turbulent two-year tour of duty in Iraq, 20-year-old Jason could not even go to the bar and enjoy a cold beer with his friends. Lowering the drinking age to 18 (against). While some believe that the prevalence of teen alcohol abuse would die down if the drinking age were lowered to 18, there is evidence to suggest quite the opposite. Having e-readers and tablet computers in the classroom (for) during this new digital age, students would likely focus more easily if they were allowed to use the tools that are most familiar to them.